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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, September 22, 1937.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "BREAD FLAVOR NEWS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

The news today concerns our daily bread and a group of scientists at the Department of Agriculture who are making a study of its flavor.

An outsider wandering around the Department of Agriculture building almost any day can see some curious goings-on--curious, that is, unless he understands why they are going on. For example, he might be surprised to notice trays of bread and water being served to many different offices just before lunch on certain days. He might wonder about the poor unfortunates existing on a bread-and-water diet. And probably if he followed the tray into these offices, he would wonder even more. These trays usually hold a glass of water, three slices of bread each in a waxed-paper envelope, and a paper score-card and pencil. As soon as the tray is served, the man or woman who receives it takes up a slice of bread, sniffs it-- yes, that's the word, sniffs--then jots something down on the score-card, then tastes the bread, writes again, and finally drinks some water before repeating the performance with the next piece of bread.

But this is the way that some 96 judges have been testing the flavor of bread made in different ways of different ingredients. These judges report on both the odor and taste of each sample and they rinse their mouths out with water between tastes. They are helping the Department's bread-flavor committee learn what the American public probably finds most appetizing in bread.

A good reason lies behind all this study of bread flavor. Americans today eat much less bread than they did 20 years ago. And many people want to know why bread has fallen off in popularity. Many experts believe that the gradual changes in bread in recent years have made it less appetizing--changes due perhaps to new varieties of wheat, or new methods of milling, or new ways of baking, distributing and wrapping. So the Department's bread-flavor committee from three Bureaus has been trying to learn which flours, which methods of milling, and bleaching, and mixing, and baking have the strongest influence on the flavor of bread as a step toward better bread and probably a larger consumption of bread.

Of course, flavor is not easy to measure scientifically, since people's tastes are so different. The only possible way to test it seems to be to use a large enough number of people with accurate and discriminating senses of taste to represent the public. In this recent study, the committee chose 96 people and once a week for 7 weeks they tested and reported on slices cut from 3 different types of bread. The first week they tested and scored bread baked from 3 classes of wheat--soft red winter wheat, hard red winter wheat, and hard red spring wheat. Then, they tasted bread made from 3 grades of flour--straight flour, 85 percent patent flour and 70 percent patent flour. (Patent percentage in flour, you know, tells how much of the total flour in each grain is milled.) The judges also tested breads made from bleached and unbleached flour; and those made with a rich, lean

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or medium formula. (A "rich" formula calls for the most sugar, fat and milk.) And finally they tasted bread that was a day old, 2 days old, and 4 days old.

A few weeks later all this tasting and judging began over again. The same 7 tests were made just to check on results.

Bread flavor studies are still going on. The committee is not satisfied yet with any hard and fast conclusions. But I'm sure you will be interested to hear how the judges have reported on bread flavor so far.

If these tasters at the Department of Agriculture represent the general public, then the public likes its bread fresh. Most of the votes were in favor of day-old bread rather than bread 2 or 4 days old.

The judges also preferred bread made with a rich formula--bread with more body and flavor due to additional sugar and fat and milk. However, they may have liked this heartier bread best because they did their tasting and judging just before lunch when they were hungry. It may be that they would prefer a less rich formula in the bread they ate with their meals regularly day after day. This is a problem for future tasters to decide.

The judges also voted for 85 percent patent flour when they were tasting bread made from different grades of flour.

And they seemed to favor bread made by the sponge method rather than the straight-dough method.

Well, one of these days when the bread-flavor committee reports more findings by its judges, you'll have more news of the whys and wherefores of appetizing flavor in bread.

But today I'd like to remind you that if you like homemade bread, and if you want to know exactly how they make it at the Bureau of Home Economics, you have only to write the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D.C. for the baking bulletin. This is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1775 which goes by the name of "Homemade Bread, Cake and Pastry." You can have a copy as long as the free supply holds out by writing the Department of Agriculture for it. A postcard will bring it to you.

